

## In Our Father's Image

Gen. 1:25-26 – “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: ...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.”

This does not mean that God physically looks like us (as in the Michelangelo painting of God and Adam touching hands, where God looks like a man with long gray hair and beard). God is Spirit (Jn. 4:24), and cannot be represented as “the man upstairs”. Of course since the Incarnation, Jesus does have a bodily form, now glorified in heaven. But when it says we are made in God's image it refers to our spiritual nature. We will never be like God in degree – he will always be infinitely above all his creation in every way. But in our newborn state we have regenerated natures that are compatible with his. We are capable of fellowship and communion with God.

Many, if not most, men desire a son, to be like him and to carry on the family image and heritage. They may even hope that the son will carry on in the same occupation and inherit the family business. While we cannot fully comprehend the mind of God, it seems apparent that he desired to make mankind with the capacity of being like himself in essential respects. When we consider the attributes of God, we usually distinguish between those that are uniquely his, like omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, and those attributes that are “communicable”. These are attributes which we can share with God, although not in perfection. Examples of these are intelligence and will, love, mercy, holiness and righteousness, justice, kindness, etc.

Even his “omni” attributes can be in a very small degree seen in us. While God is omnipotent (all powerful) to the extent of creating all things and controlling them by the word of his power, we are “some-nipotent” – we have enough God-given power to do those things that are necessary and desirable. In fact we have the power to do some things that we should not, and so God sometimes has needed to step in and put a stop to it, like the building of the tower of Babel. Gen. 11:6 – “And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.”

I have wondered why God has allowed man to violate the bounds of his habitation, by going to the moon and Mars, and sending satellites even out of our solar system, polluting the edges of space. I can only think that it is because we are in the end times, and God allows us to go on towards the ultimate reconciliation, the great judgment of the Day of the LORD.

We might also be said to have “some-niscience”. While we do not know everything as God does, yet the bounds of science and technology seem to be expanding beyond our greatest imaginations. He has given man great physical and mental capacity, not just in terms of inventiveness, but also in language, music, art, and philosophy.

As God is omnipresent, man has “some-nipresence”. Through technology we can talk to and even see people on the other side of the world in real time. He has also given us the power of imagination so we can “see” ourselves in situations that are not actual. We can “relive” history like the Civil War, through books, lectures, or movies.

In all these things man has capabilities that are completely beyond animals. We are in a degree “like God”, yet with significant limitations of degree. Unfortunately, it is possible and inevitable for fallen man to misuse and abuse these God-given abilities. We should be careful to use our minds, our senses, and imaginations for his glory and not for proud and sinful things.

The sin of idolatry is to make gods in our own image and with the same desires, or worse yet, like animals. But **true worship is for us to become like God, to let his image become more and more ingrained in us.**

In the original creation, Adam was capable of free and open fellowship with God. But after the Fall mankind was spiritually dead. There were still vestiges of the divine image, as rationality, intelligence, self-direction and will, appreciation of beauty and design, etc., but with no capability of communion with God. God and we were mutually incompatible. This is why there was a necessity of a new birth, a regeneration of the spiritual man on an individual basis. Christ is Life and Light, and through him God gives life and repentance and a new heart. 2 Cor. 5:17 says “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” God set us apart unto himself and we are sanctified.

There is a term called “gradual sanctification” that refers to growth in spiritual maturity and fruitfulness. Although I am not completely satisfied with the term, the point is valid. We are saved as spiritual babies, and are unaware of God's nature and character and his requirements of us. In time we grow and leave behind the old habits and

practices, and develop in holiness and fruitfulness, and become conformed over time to his desire and purpose for us. As regenerated, adopted sons of God, it should be our constant endeavor to be conformed to the divine image, to be “like him”, and thus fulfill his purpose for creating us. We “put off the old man” and “put on the new”. That is what it means to be a disciple, and why we are called Christians – we are Christ followers.

### **God’s purpose from eternity is to have a people like himself**

Rom. 8:29 – “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Eph. 1:4 – “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”

So if you ask “Why am I here? What is the purpose of existence?”, here is the answer.

### **We should be conforming to God’s image now in this life**

Mt. 6:48 – “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” We obviously cannot be perfect in degree because God is infinitely perfect, but we can be complete and perfect as to his revealed will, allowing ourselves to be conformed to Christ.

2 P. 1:3-4 – “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Notice that we are called to glory AND virtue. Some people deceive themselves, thinking they can get eternal glory without walking in virtue. We cannot ever be saved by works, but if there is no virtuous fruit in our lives it is proof that we were never saved at all, just religious. Those who have been truly born again have a new, redeemed, divine nature, and prove by godly and righteous living that they really have escaped the corruption of this world. We cannot live in continual, habitual sin and call ourselves believers.

2 Cor. 3:18 – “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

2 Cor. 7:1 – “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Col. 3:8-10 – “But now ye also put off all these ... [*evil deeds*] ... And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”

1 Jn. 2:6 – “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”

Eph. 5:1-2 – “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us ...” The word “followers” here means to be imitators. We are to be imitators of Christ. There is a famous devotional book by Thomas a Kempis called Imitation of Christ.

### **We will ultimately be made like him more perfectly, in heaven**

1 Cor. 15:49 – “And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

1 Jn. 3:2 – “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.”

Phl. 3:21 – “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.”

If we desire to be like him in glory in the future kingdom, we should be endeavoring as much as possible to be like him now in this life, in our thinking, our motivations, obedience, and character. This can only come by a consistent life of surrender and walking in the Spirit and allowing him to remove all impurities, and then to change and mold us as he sees fit.

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